

Sheikh Nasser was among the most approachable and considerate of all the Ministers I have met during my time in Kuwait. He enjoyed interesting and lively conversation and was possessed of a sharp wit. We met for the first time shortly after his appointment as First Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister and only a week or two before a visit to Kuwait by his British homologue. He told me how much he was looking forward to their meeting. Welcoming his guest, Sheikh Nasser joked disarmingly that neither of them could know much about defence, given how recently they had both been appointed. However, adopting a studiedly serious mien, he informed his British colleague that he nonetheless had the edge over him. "How so?" asked his anxious counterpart. "Because I own one of the largest collections of weaponry anywhere in the world", came the answer. Sheikh Nasser went on to say how familiar he was with the Wallace Collection, which his British counterpart appeared to be less conscious of. During my subsequent meetings with His Excellency he would tease me mercilessly by asking whether I had yet had the opportunity to take my minister to Manchester Square.

I am pleased to say that Sheikh Nasser found in other visitors from London readier interlocutors for discussion of Islamic culture, history and art. Their lively discussions and disquisitions would continue at length, often using up the time allotted without either having addressed either defence co-operation or any military matter at all. That said, during Sheikh Nasser's time as Minister much progress was indeed made on military matters, especially during his highly successful visit to London in May 2019, when an important Joint Declaration was signed between Britain and Kuwait, forming the basis for co-operation ever since. Before the visit I had asked Sheikh Nasser if there was anything in particular he would like us to organise. Somewhat to my surprise he said he had never seen the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London. He later told me that his visit to the Tower had been the real highlight of his visit, so I am delighted we managed to fit that into his packed programme.

Sheikh Nasser was invariably both generous with his time and lavish with his hospitality for visiting British delegations. What struck one most on such occasions was his interest in everyone, regardless of rank or station. He would stay chatting with junior officials long after official talks had broken up, charming them with his humour and listening intently to their stories. He loved discussion and the open exchange of ideas, especially if they challenged established thinking. He will be very much missed by all who had the privilege to get to know him.

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